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Daoism and Dialogism:
A Dialogue between the East and the West

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Abstract

In this paper, I explore Chinese Daoist theoretical connections with modern conceptions of dialogue and Western theories of psychology (Murase, 2008). I investigate and compare these lines of Western thinking (Strang, 2004) with classical Chinese thought (Zhang & Chen, 2009), noting the complexities in each. I discuss and disseminate how the Daoist principle of yin yang may be related to the dialogic understandings of Bakhtin (1981, 1984a, 1986, 1990, 1993). I also contend that the Western field of psychology, particularly the work of Carl Jung (2014), has incorporated Daoist principles of yin yang in its conception and practice. I argue that present Western thought in general may have connections with Chinese Daoist thinking in conceiving of a reality that is in dynamic and in flux.

Keywords: Daoism, China, dialogue, yin yang, Bakhtin, Jung, psychology, Chinese vs Western culture

Dialogue of China and the West

Born in China but having grown up in the US, I have always felt a pull between two cultures. I think of myself as a combination of two halves, engaged in a sometimes conflictual, symbiotic relationship with one another in my individual psyche. As an adolescent grappling with his cultural identity, I often felt like I was being tugged apart between the dominant culture in which I had grown, and the heritage culture to which I came home every night. I felt American, yet as I looked in the mirror, I appeared Chinese. These two dimensions of my being always vied for control over me, for I always tried to behave socially like my American peers while still conforming to Asian standards in terms of academics (Saw, Berenbaum, & Okazaki, 2013), and also engaging and identifying with the diverse multicultural, multilingual friends and acquaintances in my life.

I conceive of this dynamic relationship as a dialogue between my multiple identities (Hermans, Kempen, & van Loons, 1992), and thus have long been intrigued by the concept of dialogue. In this paper, I examine Chinese Daoist philosophy (Inada, 2003; Lao-Tzu, 1993; Zhang & Chen, 2009) and connect this thinking with Western conceptualizations of dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981; 1984a; 1986; 1990; 1993), venturing also into possible connections of both lines of thought with Western psychological principles (Jones & Morioka, 2011). I contend that Chinese and Western philosophies have overlap, revealing a shared understanding of the world. The aim of this comparison of these two realms of thinking via exploration of intersecting psychological and philosophical issues is to expand understanding of human beings and the human mind, with the focus on Daoism in conjunction with Bakhtinian and Jungian dialogism.

Problématique

Chinese and Western cultures, due to limited direct cultural exchange for millennia may have tended to develop estranged cultures, yet similarities in their respective ontologies do exist (Clarke, 2002). As each one of the important manifestations of their respective culture's thinking, Eastern Chinese Daoism and Western Bakhtinian dialogism may share important facets in their lack of finality and the fragmentation of singular thinking. There is a need to better comprehend both systems of thought, and nurture greater mutual understanding between them. In this evermore globalized world community, as humanity strives for greater connectivity and dialogue amongst ourselves, it is increasingly important to understand each other's languages and cultures to comprehend how we have come to see the world as it is (Blommaert, 2010). This interaction allows for thought processes to include multiple perspectives and contradictory elements to often coexist together. Yet, there have been, and still remain, schisms between Chinese and Western cultures.

Chinese and Western society can be thought of as, in part, developments of these two lines of thinking. Perhaps as evidence of its internal yin yang balance, Chinese society itself has long been dominated by two indigenous, at times contradictory philosophies, Confucianism and Daoism (Li, 2009). Where Confucianism values tradition, diligence, family, and obedience to authority, Daoism honors the aesthetics of beauty, the ephemeral nature of reality, and the individual's journey. Confucianism advocates discipline and structure and Daoism is more spontaneous and organic. Chinese society tends to accept and honor such contradiction, ambivalence, and vagueness as both systems of thinking coexist in the nation. In a sense, where society's outward structure was provided by Confucianism, Daoism has long supplied the soul.

Contemporary Western thinking has been profoundly influenced by the ruminations of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, who "has grown enormously, not only in literary criticism, but

also in history, anthropology, linguistics and philosophy” (Dentith, 2003, p. x). In particular, Bakhtinian dialogic principles have troubled the singularity and concrete definitive thinking inherent in structural Western thought (Bakhtin, 1981), which when correlated with Chinese Daoist philosophy, can shed greater light on the connections between the two global cultures. It is Bakhtin’s influence on philosophy that this paper addresses, particularly that philosophy’s connection to psychology.

One intention of some fields of psychology may be to bring to awareness and/or objectively manifest that which is not directly observable, our thoughts and emotions. Psychology seeks to study motivations for and the patterns of behavior and the etiology and processes of thought. Both Bakhtin’s treatment of the consciousness (or unconsciousness) and metacognition, and Daoism’s theories of the mind, intersect with the field of psychology. Modern theories of psychology, though, have generally been conceived as Western endeavors, spawning from the works of figures like William James, Wilhelm Wundt, von Hemholtz, Freud, Adler, Watson, Skinner, and Erickson. The system of the individual, the divergent forces within a person’s life, is engaged in reciprocal affect, changing and being changed by these different factors. Although family therapy and group counseling do address more systemic factors, such as interpersonal dynamics that influence individual psyches, these endeavors could benefit from holistic perspectives embedded in Daoist traditions that view the individual as both simultaneously separate from and embedded in the entirety of a shifting social system (Lu & Gilmour, 2004).

Bakhtin’s theories of the mind present a complex, multidimensional structure, as with Freud’s theories of the layers of consciousness. Dialogue is the force that makes sense of the differences, as the “contexts of usage for one and the same word often contrast with another. The

classical instance of such contrasting contexts of usage for one and the same word is found in dialogue” (Voloshinov, 1973, p.80). For, in dialogue, contradictions and contrasting components thrive together, perhaps as distorted reflections and mirrors of each other (Bakhtin, 1984a). Furthermore, Chinese Daoism and Western Bakhtinism both be considered processes of unfinished production from distinct elements: the former familiar with the vagaries and connectivity inherent in reality, while the latter also challenges the unitary, finite language from whence reality can be constructed.

Daoism, a philosophy, has been rooted in the Chinese soul. Some key terms from Daoism relevant to this paper include *Dao* (道), meaning the path or the way; *De* (德), which means virtue; *yin* (陰), meaning the feminine, implicit, or clouded, and *yang* (陽), which means the masculine, explicit, or clear (Wawrytko & Wang, 2018). *Wu wei* (無爲) refers to effortless action, *qi* (氣) is breath or life, and *tai ji* (太極) refers to the supreme ultimate state, or the oneness before duality. These concepts are central to understanding Daoism as a system of thought that thrives paradoxically on both dualism and unity, as a philosophy honoring both stillness and change. This inner complexity is central to both these veins of thought, as well as to the human experience. Thus, a deeper understanding of these philosophies may shed light on the multitudinous entanglements within individuals and their systems.

We can also see this duality in Western psychology, which as a chiefly Western science and philosophy, has thrived on this balanced and paradoxical way of viewing reality. Specifically, the human mind at times more deeply understands a phenomenon when also presented with its opposite, or in observing the two in conjunction. In fact, some psychologists have stressed the existential importance of “connecting to a narrative and dialogic stance” for individuals (Jones & Morioka, 2011, p.4).

Method

For this study, I conducted a comparative philosophy approach (Weber, 2013), which builds philosophical insight on the historical background of postcolonialism. Current international orientations and comparisons can be viewed in such a way so as to understand the privileging of certain cultural norms over others due to the historical asymmetry of nations in terms of cultural and political power. One fundamental feature of this discipline is “the comparative study of philosophical ideas, to whatever civilization they might belong” (p.594). Thus, in this article, two philosophical manifestations of Western and Chinese cultures, dialogism and Daoism respectively, are compared, as well as the cultures of their origin. In effect, this comparison of the semantic and ideological similarities between the two systems of thinking also prompts comparisons between the two great cultures.

In writing this paper, I sought to offer insight into human cultures and dynamics of thought advocated by certain cultural propensities. However, a simple philosophical comparison method has been criticized for its neglect of the underlying “contrast of basic philosophic attitudes or types of philosophy” (Ouyang, 2018, p.243). This is why the specific philosophical groundings or foundations of veins of Eastern and Western thinking have been integrally discussed and compared.

For this study, both canonical and secondary texts were surveyed regarding the philosophies of Daoism and modern dialogism to give these philosophies a holistic glance beyond the potentially personal confirming biases from focusing solely on primary texts, highlighting the contexts, both linguistic and ideological, of their conjunctions. In comparing these two lines of thinking, a basic hypothesis indicates that the similarities between two philosophies or theories are manifested through textual analysis of their fundamental treatises. In

addition, particular Jungian work, both primary and secondary were studied to note similarities and parallels between a specific vein of psychology with Daoism and dialogism. Linguistic and semantic similarities between the texts are used to illustrate these cultural and philosophical undertakings. And the underlying philosophical conjunction of these three veins of thought, and venture are highlighted to suggest the larger cultural implications of China and the West they may imply.

However, there exist limitations. Since Chinese is no longer my first language, I have had to rely on translated versions of Daoist texts, and my understandings and interpretations may deviate from their original intentions. My interpretations may also miss out on the deeper nuances of their textual context because I have had to rely on selected translated excerpts and passages. But, I believe Daoist thinking enables each individual to author his or her own path often from the same wordings, and so even though my understandings of Daoist principles may run counter to others' belief of their original intentions, they may still be valid, I contend that the intentional vagueness of Daoist writings invite more personalized interpretations (Coutinho, 2004).

Philosophical Premise

I believe the notion of dialogue to be an encounter of distinct, sometimes contradictory positions to arrive at a new space (Boyd & Markarian, 2011; Mercer & Howe, 2012). It is an interaction of views, sorting and engaging in an active process of give and take, of struggle and conflict, to arrive at a new hybrid position. Modern theories of dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981; 1986; Buber, 1999) are important components of the Western trend in epistemology (Macomb, 2005; Racine, 2008), of which psychology has also played a key role (Knobe & Nichols, 2014). In examining the theories of dialogue and psychology, particularly in Carl Jung's ideas of the

dialogical self in which he wrote about in *The Red Book* over a span of 16 years (Smythe, 2013), one may find important Chinese philosophical connections (Murase, 2008; Virtbauer, 2012; Zhang & Chen, 2009). As such, the Jungnian movement can be seen “as a philosophical approach to the self” (Jones & Morioka, 2011, p.1), and for his insights, he often “approached the golden temple of Eastern wisdom” (Coward, 1985, p.xiv). He had a certain affinity for Eastern thought, and had specifically written about how “[D]aoist philosophy as well as yoga have very many parallels with the psychic processes we can observe in the Western man” (p.5).

Chinese Daoist philosophical underpinnings may in part contribute to the ideological foundations for much of the current stress on the ephemeral nature of reality and the blurring of boundaries. Dialogic notions transcend dualistic binaries, and engender a third space of understanding and meaning-making, a space liberated from unitary perspectives to a heteroglossia of different voices (Bakhtin, 1981). These collective and dialogic principles become ever more relevant to societies today as we move toward a more systemic and globalized world community.

Western and Chinese Philosophies

In the actual development of Western thought, there were not simply peaks of enlightenment during Classical Greece and the Renaissance and ensuing Scientific Revolution periods, with a nadir between them known as the moribund Middle Ages. The quest for knowledge persisted through these years; complexities existed in human thought even during this epoch that outwardly appeared dominated by strict Christian doctrine, particularly in its scholasticism movement, which in itself was a dialogue of Christian understandings of the world with newly rediscovered Greek revelations (Blankenhorn, 2014). Just as Daoism and Confucianism dialogued with one another in classical Chinese philosophical contexts, Greek

thought also dialogued with Judeo-Christian verities in Western culture in the scholastic movement, perhaps as precursor to the quest of knowledge heralded by the Renaissance.

The period of the Renaissance, itself, could also be conceptualized as a dialogic era between classical and medieval art and thinking with contemporary technology and philosophy, which provided the basis for the Scientific Revolution, bridging these two eras (“Renaissance,” 2015). But, perhaps the chronotopes of human history, the idea of “time-space” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.425), or the epochs of civilization, are never finite, insular chapters in time. Instead of viewing eras as distinct periods, as frames of a movie, perhaps it is better to conceive of them as blurred hybrids of previous and future frames, as one of infinite moments in the process of becoming. The contentious dialogic interaction described in the yin yang relationship is central to current Western thinking, whether it be in the fields of physics, chemistry, politics, philosophy, or religion (Sass, 2008). There is the counterbalance of equal and opposite forces that synthesize the whole system.

Herein lies a connection with psychology, as Jung was notably interested in *The Secrets of the Golden Flower*, a classical Daoist text stressing “the importance of having a balance between opposites in one’s experience” (Coward, 1985, p.7). In his analytical theories, he also coined the concept of *synchronicity*, a notion “which demonstrated to Jung that there were meaningful connections between the inner psychic realm and the external physical world” (Coward, 1996, p.477). This synchronous existence of multiplicities speaks to the power of psychology to make meaning from human experiences (including language), which is also the power of both Daoism and dialogism. Hence, in this paper, I specifically address Daoism’s connection with both Bakhtinian dialogism and psychology.

Dialogue of Daoism, dialogism, and psychology. The two philosophies of Daoism and dialogism have notable intersections and distinctions. Chinese Daoism, instead of conceiving of people as singularly good or evil, views humans as a complex blend of both forces working towards systemic balance within the individual and among individuals amidst the larger community. Instead of partitioning reality, there may be efforts to blend and mix disjointed aspects, encouraging their interaction and dialogue. Also, there is a directional impulse, as both dynamics represent a movement forward, towards greater understanding and enlightenment.

Despite similarities between Chinese Daoism and Bakhtinian dialogism, there are also major differences. Firstly, Bakhtinian dialogism was meant to describe literary critique and linguistics. Bakhtin studied works of literature and their authors, where the practitioners of Daoism contemplated existential philosophy. The former's articulations related to texts, and the latter were concerned with the universality of life. Where the *Dao de Jing* readily used metaphors and symbolisms, Bakhtin critiqued this kind of literary devices in text using concrete, though at times ambiguous, language. The language used, thus, also differ, as the *Dao de Jing* often uses words like "needs" or "must," emphasizing one Dao, or path to fulfillment, while Bakhtin's (1981) language is rarely so prescribed and unitary, freeing a multitude of paths to understanding.

So, where dialogism honors intertextuality and variation, Daoism, despite double-sided discourse, still imagines a single path. Instead of multiple voices chorusing simultaneously, there may be a superimposed metaperspective that conjoins them. There is more emphasis on harmony and union, a path to a unitary understanding of one answer, though at times double-voiced. There is actually a flow to a central idea, with centripetal forces, as "All things and beings will eventually return to the original source" (Lao-Tzu, 1993, Chapter 16, line 4). Bakhtin (1990), on

the other hand, “abhors all claims to oneness” (p. xxvi), either in the monoglossia of conformity or the strict singularity of unitary language. In Bakhtin’s thinking, paths that converge risk the silencing of valid perspectives that need to forever dialogue with an official “truth.” The impetus for movement better be in heteroglossic centrifugal flow where multiple voices chorus meaning, not inwards towards some congruous blending as in Daoism. Here, we see a connection of Daoism with the psychological relationship, wherein the relationship between client and therapist is often also geared toward a common goal or understanding.

Where conflict or multiple voices and paths are included in Bakhtinian dialogue, Daoism is more about harmony and peace. Where both conceive of multiplicities, Bakhtin’s (1986) notion is perhaps more active, for when “[t]he other’s voice is limited, passive [...] there is no depth or productivity (creative, enriching) to the interrelations between the voices” (p.111, parenthetical in original). Daoist thinking is less volitional and contentious. *The Dao de Jing* reads in Chapter Sixteen, “If one maintains calmness with sincerity, one can observe the growth and flourish of all things and they return to the roots” (lines 1-2). Daoist thought have also claimed, “To a mind that is still, the whole universe surrenders” (Varma, 2011, para. 1). So, whereas Bakhtin envisions growth in action and interaction, Daoism asserts that growth comes from stillness and observation. The former is more engaging, the latter more passive, emphasizing *wu wei*, or effortless action (Komjathy, 2004). Also, the structure of interaction differs in the two philosophies, as Daoism tends to position ideas as polar opposites, whereas Bakhtinian dialogic relations can engage in a multidimensional, multiplane manner between and among different stratifications.

Additionally, the yin and yang in Daoism, though distinct, actually constitute one whole, and are inseparable, unlike the two parties of a dialogue. In essence, the former are two phases of

that entire entity, and are not separate constituencies, like *I* and *the Other* in Bakhtinian dialogue. There is no hybridity or dialogue between the two phases of yin yang, as each constitutes an integral aspect of reality without excluding the other. There is no fusion of perspectives or hybridization of characteristics. It may also be interpreted that Bakhtin's notion of hybridity is also a condition that preserves the original fidelity of each voice, of each consciousness, so that the resultant is a double-voiced, double-faced discourse. Consequently hybridity is not a simple meshing; "rather it is a dialogue between points of view, each with its concrete language that cannot be translated into the other" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 76), each side of the discourse retaining its original characteristics, but unlike yin yang, also influencing the other.

Pluralization of Subjectivities

The *Dao* is utterly subjective, residing in the one true self of the individual. For example, Chapter Forty-Seven of the *Dao de Jing* reads, "Dao exists in one's true self. It cannot be found outside of one's true nature" (lines 1-2). Such thinking not only prioritizes the inner sphere alone, but also honors again the singularity of reality. There is one true self, one true personal perspective that is impervious to external or internal effect.

Dialogism, on the other hand, can manifest both internally and externally intersubjectively, which can be conceived as distinct perspectives one holds, "based on the assumption that there are many *I* positions that can be occupied by the same person" (Hermans et al., 1992, p.29). These positions or perspectives engage in dialogue within one individual, so this dynamic nurtures intersubjectivities and heteroglossia even within one person. Bakhtinian thinking honors diversity and multivoicedness, as in freeing all to voice their views in society. In his thinking, centrifugal forces and heteroglossia incites generativity and growth (Bakhtin, 1981).

Still, both dialogic and Daoist forces compel growth and advancement in understanding, even with fluctuations in movement.

This split of selves is also central to understanding psychological principles in partitioning the self in various guises. In Jungian psychology for instance (Jones & Marioka, 2011), a “collaborative pluralism” exists in a person (p.1), as separate selves in the mind dialogue with each other. In essence, he conceives of consciousness as “a ‘divided whole’ whose various parts are relatively independent, ‘so much so that certain parts of the psyche never become associated with the ego at all’” (p.15). The *I* positions (Hermans et al., 1992) people hold in dialogical theory also link with the different masks people wear, reminiscent of Jung’s (2014) notions of both personas, or the social face presented to the world, and complex, a more personal unconscious. These archetypes are different roles an individual’s ego assumes in different contexts, much like the distinct *I* positions one dons in various scenarios. Their manifestation is like a dialogic encounter between the individual’s mind and the external world. In theories of the mind, we also see the counterbalance of opposite ideas, emphasizing a duality of man in both the personal awareness with the collective unconscious, and in opposing archetypes: the anima and the animus, the ego and its shadow (Jung, 1989).

In fact, Jung’s work is noticeably in dialogue with modern dialogical self theory, which both informs and is informed by the former’s earlier conjectures (Smythe, 2013). In particular, his dialogical dynamics of the otherness within the Self resembles modern dialogical splits of the self into separate *I* positions (Hermans et al., 1992). In the analytical psychologist’s views, the individual Self actually consists of various guises, subject to internal dialogization. He discussed these issues in *The Red Book*, a record of his discovery of his Self through active dialogue with an alter persona, known as The Red One. These dialogical engagements give glimpse into a

complex mind fraught with distinct fragments, different positionalities. Dialogical self theory, in its turn, conceives of independent and autonomous *I*'s in active dialogue with each other and the external world within a person. In other words, an individual is apt to embody a certain *I* position in a certain life situation, for example that of a parent while tending to the newborn, or that of a child when at a family gathering with elders. These perspectives engage with each other within a person, as he or she assumes these positionalities; in some cases, both positions exist simultaneously. In both dialogical self theory and Jungian thought, the different positions, like the parent and the child, can always be in dialogization within the Self. Yet, the mind forms the context within which these forces reside, and like the circle of yin yang, provides the fluid boundary for these interactions. Where Daoism conceives of one true self, Bakhtin, as with Jung, on the other hand, thinks of people as having multiple selves in dialogue with each other within an individual. Bakhtin (1984a) believes that "*a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with his own world*, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event[s he depicts]" (p.6, emphasis in original, parenthetical added).

With respect to the larger philosophical context, Daoism broke from the rigidities of the sanctioned Confucian doctrine to consider opposite truths, just as dialogism and Jungian psychology broke from the singularities of dominant structural Western thought, imagining greater diversity and heteroglossia in a previously singular or categorical construct. In essence, Daoism upset the understanding of the time with emphasizing the existence of a split characterization of human beings. The essence of both dialogism and psychology also speaks to this complexity by coloring and naming the different faces of humanity. The heart of the present discussion is how each of these lines of thinking pluralizes the human experience.

Psychological Dynamics of Dialogue

This article presents Bakhtin's (1981, 1984a, 1986, 1990) understanding of the dialogical relationship, particularly with respects to the engaged identities. This interaction is defined as "a tense dialogic struggle [which] takes place on the boundaries" between the participating parties (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 143, parenthetical added). He delineates the disparate consciousness involved, but even more relevant to the principle of yin yang, and describes the boundary between them (Scott, 2007). This border made permeable through the interaction of words and the synthesis of ideas. As such, his ideas have important connections with psychology.

Yet, dialogue may not be simply a union or fusion of different voices, but perhaps as the "interrelations between inserted other's speech and the rest of the speech (one's own) are analogous neither to any syntactical relations within a simple or complex syntactic whole nor to the referentially semantic relations among grammatically unrelated individual syntactic wholes found within a single utterance" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.92, parenthetical in original). There is rather an active process of interrelation, of mutual effect; as one party is changed, so too is the other, but not to the point that they become one, losing each's unique qualities. Nor is this the case of the yin yang, as both hues still maintain their singularity, their particular shade, even in midst the duality of their synthesis. Thus both voices and perspectives are intact. This dynamic describes the therapeutic relationship as well, where clients' thoughts incorporate the words and suggestions of the therapist, and comes to some sort of understanding through this interrelation. The client's notion of the world is changed, but so too is the therapist's. Both dialogism and Daoism is about preserving distinctions so multiple voices or perspectives are heard.

The intermingling of these positions, of these viewpoints, results in a dynamic unity that forms the basis of humanity's "collective unconscious" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 144), which is

“retained in the unconscious (if only the collective unconscious) and was fixed in the memories of languages, genres, and rituals” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.144, parenthetical in original). This positioning of the unconscious as the progeny for human thought and consciousness relates to Freud’s role for the unconscious, as crucially influential to our psyche. Furthermore, Jung also addresses the collective unconscious in his theories of the mind as a collection of resonance backgrounds containing humankind’s collective history that influence our beings (Jones & Morioka, 2011). This notion of the pluralization of the mind intersects with modern dialogical self thinking in conceiving of separate paradigms for reality or existences within one single individual. This sense of Otherness within the Self presents not merely an oppositional structure, but as with the dialogical self theory, a set of “mutually entangled voices and perspectives” (Smythe, 2013, p.638).

These disparate notions and conjectures form the basis of all human awareness and thought. As such, they can result in different perspectives various people may hold about aspects of their world, positions which can then engage in dialogic interactions with each other. In fact, in many of Bakhtin’s own texts, he is prone to contradictory statements, at times in a single sentence. Heterogeneity and contrasts shatter monoglossic perceptions, and hinders unitary thinking, as the reader needs to juggle distinct perspectives simultaneously in processing the text. In conjoining the disjointed parameters of the self and the other, Bakhtin (1986) concludes that there is a “*Not-I* in me, that is, existence in me; something larger than me in me. To what degree is it possible to combine *I* and *other* in one neutral image of a person” (pp. 146-147). This relates to psychology in conceiving of the self in relations to another, or the Self in dialogue with an Otherness (Smythe, 2013). But, Bakhtin, in conceiving of this dialogue, arrives at a superior position beyond the scope of either party involved. The whole represents this recognition of the

validity and integrity of these separate parts, while synthesizing a dynamic fusion of these concepts (Inada, 2003). This is also a central theme of Daoism, perhaps best exemplified by the concept of yin yang and the tai ji.

Principles of Yin Yang

Notions of yin yang have been central to Daoist thought dating back to the 6th Century BCE in China (Inada, 2003; Johnson, 2010). This philosophy “saw everything [in the world] as part of a single energy flow continuum constantly fluctuating between extremes [representing] opposite expression of each and every concept” (Johnson, 2010, p. 641, parenthetical added). In this principle, we observe two contrary positions simultaneously “create each other and cancel each other to balance the one in harmonious interplay” (Johnson, 2010, p.641). So, in this respect, dialogue differs because in dialogue, the goal is not to cancel out the sides, but to engender a new hybridized understanding with elements of each intact (Bakhtin, 1981). In the Daoist symbol, we see an interaction of opposing or divergent forces, represented by the colors black and white, conjoined and entwined in a circle. Neither hue overpowers the other, yet both appear in the act of conquest. The two sides are symmetrical, “the result of a rhythmic superposition of countless pairs of equivalent opposite expressions” (Johnson, 2010, p. 641). Such power equality between parties is also a necessity of effective dialogue. There cannot be vast power differentials in psychological relationships either.



Figure 1: Symbol of yin yang in tai ji. Reprinted from *Explore Yin Yang meaning, Chinese art, and more!* Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/224687468889385073/>.

The fundamentals of yin yang philosophy assert that there is no pure state, that nothing in reality is completely unitary (Fang & Faure, 2011), of one hue or one truth. The symbol of the yin yang, their union representing the tai ji, is that of two overlapping crescents, one black and one white. But in the middle of the white crescent is a black circle, and in midst the black crescent is a white circle. This dynamic represents that even in the blackest black, there is white, and in the whitest white, there is black. Together, these crescents of the yin yang form a circle, representing oneness or unity. In relations to the world, they represent two paradoxical conditions interacting in a struggle for domination, like extreme liberals and extreme conservatives in politics, or the conditions of absolute wealth and those of abject poverty. In both of these dynamics, most of reality exists in the middle (Ma, 2005). Yet, one position is

impossible (or invisible) without the other, and opposing forces are relatively bonded and a new combination of unique understanding is enkindled.

Yin Yang in Bakhtinian Dialogue

Just as Bakhtin (1986) characterized the positions in a dialogue as the self and the other, the two sides of yin yang represent the self and nonself, or ātman and anātman, “two sides of one’s ongoing experience” (Inada, 2003, p. 338). Thus, in Chinese thought, the dualistic principles of the self and other are coalesced and unified into one greater entity. This is also the goal of dialogue, this meeting of disparate, at time contradictory, positions, though synthesis may not always be the result. Because dialogue requires the existence of such an oppositional or dissimilar force, it does necessitate a duality of consciousness. In fact, Bakhtin (1981) speaks of this “(d)ouble voiced, internally dialogic discourse” (p.325), as seemingly incompatible distinctions mutually affect each other as they come into contact. As they collide, a meeting of positions occurs, resembling the yin yang structure (Inada, 2003; Zhang & Chen, 2009).

Psychology can in some sects be conceived as a study that manifests the subjective inner world externally so it can be studied, as “the mind and body were [positioned as] two entities that interact to form the human experience” (Cherry, 2018, n.p., parenthetical added). The field is often about bridging the divide between the internal and the external. Similarly, in conceiving of reality, Bakhtin (1993) partitions experience into a sense of the act or object and the actual act or object. There is the eternal tension between subjectivity and objectivity such that the “birth of an objective cultural value entails the death of the subjective soul” (Voloshinov, 1973, p.40). In both Daoism and dialogism, the name or idea of something is separate from the actual idea. This implies that a notion is not given breath unless acted upon or truly understood by a subject.

These distinct elements complement each other, are inherently linked, yet remain separate. In Bakhtin's (1993) view of this dual reality:

(T)wo worlds confront each other, two worlds that have absolutely no communication with each other and are mutually impervious: the world of culture and the world of life...An act of our activity, of our actual experiencing, is like a two-faced Janus. It looks in opposite directions: it looks at the objective unity of a domain of culture and at the never repeatable uniqueness of actually lived and experienced life. But there is no unitary or unique plane where both faces would mutually determine each other in relation to a single unique unity. It is only the once occurrent event of Being in the process of actualization that constructs this unique unity. [As such, an] act must acquire a single unitary plane to be able to reflect itself in both directions – in its sense or meaning of its being; it must acquire the unity of two-sided answerability (p.2, parenthetical added)

Actually, Bakhtin conceives of this encounter of the worlds as double-voicedness, heralding hybridity. Hybridization “is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.358). Such are also the complementary positions of Daoist thinking, where the Dao represents the unity of understanding, while within this school of thought there are also multiple paths that lead to one's goal. The symbiosis of yin yang contradictions perhaps best exemplifies this “two-sided answerability.” In truly living the path of the Dao, one must be open to, and understanding of, such dual conceptions of the world.

This idea of answerability, of internally constructed dialogue, is also at times explicitly present in the *Dao de Jing* (Lao-Tzu, 1993). For example, the *Dao de Jing* asks in Chapter Twenty Three, “What caused these effects?” (line 4) and then answers, “Heaven and Earth” (line 5). Yet, later in the chapter, it reads, “One who identifies with the loss of the Dao and De is glad to be with the lost. If one does not have enough faith in ‘Dao,’ how can he assist others to practice with faith?” (lines 16-17). So the reverse order occurs with the statement followed by the question, precisely as yin yang balance.

It is this idea of answerability in both Bakhtinian and Daoist thinking that makes both lines of thought vague, perhaps a precursor to each’s power to incite dialogism, because the answer uniquely belongs to the individual. For example, the *Dao de Jing* reads in Chapter Twenty-One, “The Dao is vague and intangible, yet in the vague void, there is image, there is substance” (lines 2-3). Perhaps that image is transposed by the individual, just as the answer to Bakhtinian dialogism resides in the idiosyncratic voice of the reader. Each dialogue, just as each Dao, is unique and unreplicable, influenced by the nuanced minutiae of individual experiences.

Ying Yang in both Daoism and Dialogism

Both Daoism and Dialogism believe in duality or co-existence such as unity vs. individuality, I vs. others, and birth vs. death, grounded in ying yang doctrine, Bakhtin (1981; 1984b) is intrigued with this concept of duality of opposites in communication, as “[a]buse and praise are mingled [as the] positive superlative mode is combined with such semi-insulting terms” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 168, parenthetical added). He also speaks of how “death throes...and childbirth [can be] intimately interwoven” (p. 151), the beginning and end of life somehow entwined as a unity. Here, we see this linguist conceive reality as the frictional synthesis of opposites, much like the Daoist concept. Accordingly, the *Dao de Jing* states in Chapter Two,

“As soon as beauty is known by the world as beautiful, it becomes ugly. As soon as virtue is being known as something good, it becomes evil. Therefore, being and non-being gives birth to each other” (lines 1-3). Here Daoist philosophy describes the entwined and paradoxical condition of two contradictions, engaged in an eternal dialogue. I believe it asserts that as soon as we enter too deeply into one way of perceiving the world, the opposite view manifests. Bakhtin (1984b) addresses via his writings in *Rabelais and His World* the central yin yang definition, which asserts the inclusion of a paradoxical position within another. He constructs an image “that [is] complex, universal, and ambivalent [- a] paradoxical figure” (p. 179). In midst of the commonly held unitary perspective of the Christian religious domination and strict social stratification of the Middle Ages (Bakhtin, 1981; Miller, 2000), Bakhtin reminded us of the act of Carnival, a time of year when people of all creeds and classes could shed their stratified identities and engage with each other as equals, dialoguing on the same level, disrobed of power differentials.

Thus, even in the depth of such a restrictive climate, there were acts of liberation and expression in the grotesque realism of Carnival cultural festivities that acted as forerunners to the artistic and expressive explosion of the Renaissance. He speaks of “this solemn, pompous, and monumental tone” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 178) of the time infused with instances of indecent jokes and “the laughter of the marketplace” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p.178). So, as we see, reality is never unitary (Bakhtin, 1981), but rather a complex blend of ideologies and “realities.” Modern dialogic complexities may also have seeds in the depths of Middle Age European culture, for even in a time and place dominated by Christianity and strict doctrine, there were always attempts by humanity to discourse with the rigidities of the era.

In the Middle Ages, Bakhtin (1984b) describes “the drama of laughter presenting at the same time the death of the old and the birth of the new world [each] subject to the meaning of the

whole; each reflects a single concept of a contradictory world of becoming” (p.149, parenthetical added). It was during this time, that a “boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 4).

Furthermore, the act of laughter here can be conceived as yin yang, encompassing simultaneously both birth and death, in a dynamic and symbiotic relationship (Lao-Tzu, 1993), like the laughter of adulation and the laughter of derision, or the laughter of ecstasy and the laughter of desperation. Such behavior “must prevail even in the most serious historic struggle” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 179). Carnival is a “time which kills and gives birth” simultaneously (p.211), and “laughter in its universal, ambivalent sense” is at the boundary of life and death, of the sacred and the grotesque (p. 180). The act also marks the boundaries and intersection of the old and the new, and describes a synthesis of opposites that is endless, and always in the process of becoming. Bakhtin goes on to analyze the complex role of the one hundred seven distinct cries in the marketplace. Human cries, thus, offer the counterweight and yin yang balance to earlier treatments of laughter. But, even tears can result from joy, thus bringing yin yang complexity to this “opposite” emotion. Here he highlights the “double aspect of the world and human life” (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 6).

In his writing, Bakhtin (1984b) combines opposite contradictory ideas together to present the inherent paradoxes in reality, such as when he writes of the human body as an entity that “exceeds its own limits in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation” (p.26). In describing the beginning of life with the end of life, the ingestion and expulsion of food and drink, he asks the reader to simultaneously consider two contrary, opposite ideas in conjunction, the sanctioned and the vulgar, hybridized together in one single utterance.

Yin yang may also be thought of as a holistic, complementary duality of opposites advocating “a holistic, dynamic, and dialectical worldview” (Fang, 2012, p.26).

Yet, Bakhtin’s (1990) treatment of opposites can also be misunderstood as “a mechanical concern for binary oppositions” (p.xxiii), when his focus is more specifically on the bind that ties contrasting elements together, the dialogue that connects ideas, like the Daoist principle of the tai ji. For Bakhtin, simultaneity is by definition dialogic, and the dynamic should not be viewed as “a private *either/or*, but an inclusive *and/also*” (Bakhtin, 1990, p.xxiii, emphasis in original). Opposite conditions need not be partitioned, but can coexist in Daoist synergy. Via his dialogical ideations, through his own internal contradictions and concerns for hybridization, Bakhtin develops a more holistic, double-voiced heteroglossic metaperspective of human language and culture on the philosophical path resembling Daoism.

Yin Yang and Dialogue

Apart from the semantic elements, there is also structural similarity between yin yang and dialogue which resides in the fact that both represent a process, and not some resolute, fixed, certain state. Dialogue creates a sense of reality that shifts, always refining its position (Buber, 1999). Perhaps this is the role of dialogue in psychology, to shift the realities of the client, and therapist, to some deeper understanding. Thus, the result is not a static consciousness, but one liable to morph. The notion of yin yang also represents this fluid phenomenon, as the two concepts “are soft and pliable in the sense that they enable smooth movement from one to the other” (Inada, 2003, p.338).

Like yin yang, dialogue is infinite and boundless, as Bakhtin (1986) characterizes dialogue as extending “into the boundless past and the boundless future” (p. 170), where those “*past meanings...born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended*

once and for all)- they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.170, parenthetical in original). There is something eternal and living about Bakhtin’s notion of dialogue, for “[t]here is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context” (p.170). In dialogic relationships, meaning is an ever-creating, vivacious process, dynamic and evolving with the context. Such eternal interactions are also found in the concept of yin yang, which represents a perpetually dynamic harmony.

Finally, Bakhtin’s (1986) concepts of centrifugal and centripetal forces in the evolution and development of human language mirrors the Daoist symbol of yin yang. The smaller circles inside the larger crescents may represent a pulling in of ideas to one standard language or thinking, or what Bakhtin (1981) deemed to be centripetal movements. The larger crescents, on the other hand, represent the simultaneous expansion of perspectives and dialects, or centrifugal forces. Thus, the yin yang structure mirrors dialogic dynamics in its duality of oppositional positions. Even as centripetal forces pull meaning inwards to some unitary understanding, other centrifugal tendencies push outwards to a heteroglossia of voices and meanings, and stratified realities. The structures of the dynamics of each mirror each other. This may also describe the dynamic in counseling, as the session strives for a common understanding while also considering the distinct realities of the client(s) and therapist(s).

Daoism and Dialogism

In pulling these ideas together, forming our own centripetal pull, I see commonalities that span the two concepts of Daoism and dialogism. Daoist principles of “emptiness, nonbeing, and nonself...are elusive and illusive to perception because of our normal positivist bent on perceiving reality” (Inada, 2003, p. 339). Both these two strands of thought break from the

positivist tradition to a new conceptualization of reality. Dialogism works with this philosophical leaning because the dynamic also conceives of the self and nonself, or I and the other (Bakhtin, 1986), which are thrust together in a tentative, unstable unity.

Bakhtin's (1986) dialogism is "against enclosure in a text [for he] hear[s] *voices* in everything and [the] dialogic relations among them" (p. 169, parenthetical added). With dialogue, one increases the subjectivities from only one to multiple, to intersubjectivities. At minimum, there are "a question, an address, and the anticipation of a response" (p. 170). The binary is inherent in dialogue, when "(q)uestion and answer presuppose mutual outsideness [as i]f an answer does not give rise to a new question from itself...falls out of the dialogue and enters into systemic cognition" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 168). Thus, the subjectivities are aggrandized, as different perspectives intermingle in dialogic relationships. There are no clear certainties, only a fluid, subjective frame of mind that morphs with the epoch and chronotope of human experience (Bakhtin, 1981). In this way, dialogue contributes to a frame of reference that allows the constant shifting of identities and positions, such that the dynamic outer world is but a manifestation of our fluid internal constructs.

Like dialogism, Daoism also advocate a transience and fluidity. Because the language of the *Dao de Jing* is intentionally vague, the reader then needs to impart his or her local truths to co-construct the meaning of the text. There is dialogue in understanding the text, as in Daoist thinking, the individual path or psyche is prioritized. Thus, a plurality of personal truths is permitted as the individual must find his or her own life path. The language of most Daoist texts is purposefully open-ended, open to dialogic meaning making between the text, the author, and the reader. Again, since the focus is on the individual's perceptions and cognitions, I contend that perhaps some of Bakhtin's vague language use may serve a similar purpose. This type of

thinking, due to its focus on multiplicities and diversity, a “kind of open-endedness[,] is both intrinsic to his thought and desirable” (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p.2).

Dialogism and Daoism in Psychology

In current conceptions of dialogism (Bakhtin, 1986; Buber, 1999), we see the same dynamic yet stable relationship that exists in the Daoist principle of yin yang (Inada, 2003; Johnson, 2010; Scott, 2007).. Yet, as described, Western culture has tended to be a blend of thinking, a bridge between today and the past, heralding future paths. In the scholasticism and Renaissance movements, antiquity dialogued with the Christian beliefs of the Middle Ages to herald cultural and scientific advancements. These contradictions also influence society today, especially in our increasingly culturally and linguistically plural world (Blommaert, 2010). These two philosophies fold nicely into the field of psychology, though they germinated from distinct cultural origins.

However, there is still a central methodological problem with the present argument, as such arises from comparison of two dissimilar products. Thought at times abstruse and ambivalent, Bakhtin’s theories are still single-voiced for the speaker is particular with a set cultural, semantic, and experiential background from which to interpret his words. Thereby understanding his words can proceed from the same frame. On the other hand, Daoist thinking and the notion of yin yang are less attributed to a single source, but to a number of different cultural inclinations given breath by multiple anonymous authors (Hansen, 2003). Therefore, interpretation of Daoist conjectures cannot be so confined. Comparing these two veins of thought thus also need to consider that they may not merit such equal comparison. **Psychology in Eastern and Western Culture**

Daoism has important connections to the Chinese brand of psychology (Hwang, Shiah, & Yit, 2017). Scholars have pointed to the interpersonal dynamics of harmony and conflict with select individuals as one's personal attempts at maintaining yin yang balance. There are attempts to ferret the system of forces, and honor variation and dialogue within those dynamics. Psychology for Chinese people is less concerned with an individual's processes than the system of that person, consisting of his or her social network and interpersonal interactions.

Generically, in the Western field of psychology (Yang & Ye, 2014), the act of dialogue between the client and therapist (or even the client with him or herself) is central to understanding, but additionally, the dynamic of opposite forces has always existed as well. Freud's ideas of the superego and id embody one's sense of higher morality and our most primal desires engaged in an eternal struggle over the ego, where this tense dialogue takes place. The ego can be conceived as the tai ji, or boundary between the two spheres. Also this conception of the conscious and unconscious (or subconscious) bleeding into each other, each sphere affecting the other, is analogous to the dynamic of the yin yang. These ideas are mirrored in Jung's archetypal concepts of the ego and the shadow, or the anima and animus, two contradictory yet conjoined entities. Although opposite ideas, individuals consist of aspects of each, which also affects the other. Psychology can be about encountering mind with matter, about bringing into the embodied space our disembodied thoughts or feelings. In some fields, the body realm is given precedence (e.g., behaviorism) and in others, the mind is more dominant (e.g, cognitive psychology).

Jung's conjectures in particular coincides with Bakhtinian and Daoist thinking in conjuring a dialogical, interconnected space for human thought and identity (Jones & Morioka, 2011). His thinking suggests the need for creating a therapeutic narrative, in which both the

client's sense of reality, as well as the therapist's, are in dialogue with each other to incur a transpersonal dynamic, "which [can] generate rich therapeutic meaning and images" (p.4). In such a relationship, the client's sense of reality is also seen as valid and therapy becomes "an interactive dialogical process" (p.5), as tension and union both affect change in the individual. Here, the focus is less on one individual, as on the entire therapeutic system. Additionally, in his study of personality styles, such as extroverted and introverted, "one could find a unity in which these opposite personality types would be balanced and their narrowness transcended" (Coward, 1996, p.478). Likewise, "Jung's psychology, like Daoism, involves the ego and one's personal being in a secondary position to the Self or Dao, which is the Supreme Being, Primary Essence, or Eternal Way"(Rosen, 1996, n.p.), representing the unity of the individual.

In this sense psychology intersect with notions of yin yang, in reflecting the boundaries of thought and manifestation. Jung's (1974) work, particularly his idea of compensation, speaks to this balancing force within the psyche. In theorizing about the mind, he writes:

The unconscious content contrasts strikingly with the conscious material, particularly when the conscious attitude tends too exclusively in one direction that would threaten the vital needs of an individual. The more one-sided his conscious attitude is, and the further it deviates from the optimum, the greater becomes the possibility that vivid dreams with a strongly contrasting but purposive content will appear (p.41)

This balancing of consciousness with the unconscious resembles the yin yang dynamic, as each contrast with the other in equal magnitude. In essence, this dynamic has been explicitly described as a "relational dialogue between the ego and the unconscious" (Adams, 2000, p.28).

The psychology field can be about verbalizing or making explicit the implicit voiceless aspects of human consciousness. With this respects, the notion of answerability applies, whether relating to questioning by the counselor or therapist, or internally when understanding one's own thinking or feeling. In other sects, like behaviorism or behavioral neuroscience, observable human behavior and physiological processes are given greater precedence. Some strict behaviorists, in an effort to objectify and make more scientific the field, have only focused on the directly observable and manipulable in their study (Chugh, Bazerman, & Banaji, 2005). In such cases, materialism distills psychology to the physical and perceptible; although by doing so, the two realms of mind and matter are still present (Robinson, 2017). The physical represents or manifests what is directly unobservable, thereby implying its existence. Such scholars still endeavor to affect or study the internal world (e.g., motivations, thoughts) through external material forces or manifestations, implying a duality as represented by the yin yang. The yang can be considered the expressed behavioral manifestations and the yin complement, the implied underlying psychological or physiological impulse. Finally, behaviorism often deals with learning through a schedule of reinforcements or punishments, and learning implies an inner world.

Another connection with Daoism and dialogue is psychology's incorporation of paradox. There have been many therapeutic techniques based on paradox, or having the client actually perform more of the undesired behavior to curtail it (e.g., Frankl, 1960; Hirscher et al., 2015). In Frankl's paradoxical intention as part of his logotherapy for example, the patient is taught to gravitate more towards or exaggerate his or her obsessive, compulsive, or phobic behaviors. The negative behavior is emboldened rather than hindered. The effect of this tactic is increased control of the patient over his or her symptoms. In a sense, the patient realizes symptomatic

behavior is tied to the appropriate behavior as two sides of the same impulse. Those psychological ailments can be reined in by the same control that heralds them.

Furthermore, in Adlerian psychology (Carlson & Slavik, 1997), paradoxes are regularly employed to upset the counseling relationship, such as encouraging patient rebellion of counselor authority to increase patient esteem. By inviting such antagonism and active resistance to therapy, the patient is actually benefitting more from the sessions. Thus, paradoxes have been successfully implemented in various schools of psychology as a means for the patient to gain control over his or her symptoms or of the counseling process itself. By presenting patients with the opposite choice, they gain control over their behavior to gravitate towards more appetitive behavior (Ascher, 2005; Weeks & L'Abate, 1982).

Likewise in Gestalt psychology, the whole is considered more essential than the individual parts, just as the whole dynamic constructed by the yin yang is greater than the individual shades (Rock & Palmer, 1990). A central Daoist principle is learning to see the big picture, and Gestalt notions are also informed by such a philosophy. Gestalt therapy tends to see the client as a whole, as everything in his or her life is connected and symptoms may manifest in various other facets or behavior. Additionally, in family therapy, the family is often thought of as a whole unit of which the individual is a part, and systemic thinking characterizes this field (Dallos & Draper, 2010), connecting with the idea of *tai ji* in Daoism. Thus, various schools of psychology have strains of connection to Daoist principles and worldviews. There have also been efforts in the field to overcome this dichotomy, such as with holistic or transpersonal psychology that views the embedded factors of the whole system for one's psyche. Yet, these efforts have largely been glossed over or suppressed (Lipp, Gill, & Foster, 2018).

Finally, Rogerian client centered therapy focuses on the internal emotional world of the client, and the relationship between him or herself with the therapist or with the other forces in his or her life (Hermson, 1996). There is dialogue and interaction amongst all these separate components. The field also has as its guiding principle: “the way to be is...a psychological climate crucial for the desirable therapeutic relationship” (p. 112). Thus, the existential path of the client is crucial to the functionality of therapy. Self-actualization, or an actualizing tendency of individuals found in client-centered psychology is like an individual’s journey on his or her personal Dao, a path geared towards understanding and acceptance. Also, empathy is what the therapist seeks with the client, and empathy is a joining of separate emotional states, like the synthesis of yin yang. The therapist may see him or herself as one with the client, and feel his or her sentiments. In these various veins of psychology, we see important intersections with Daoist beliefs.

Perhaps Daoism and dialogism do inform psychological theory, yet a distinction also needs to be maintained. Psychology has traditionally corresponded to the dualism between mind and body (Descartes, 1989), yet Daoism and dialogism is more about the duality of distinct forces, how both can exist as a hybridized one simultaneously. In various individualistic psychology disciplines, one arena is prioritized (e.g., cognitive therapy) and in others, another (e.g., behavioral therapy). Yet, even when they are conjoined (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy), the mind and body, thought and action, are not conceived as one, but as related arenas to be addressed. However, in more recent developments, the field of psychology has diverged from these dualistic constraints to include interactionism and parallelism forces, as interpersonal thinking and behavior have been reconceptualized to encompass other directions and dimensions

(Robinson, 2017). There is a systemic confluence of behavior and the psyche, and the field more resembles Daoist inclinations.

The goal of many strains of psychology is helping the individual find his or her own path, as undoubtedly, no two cases are identical, although there are some veins of clinical psychology and psychiatry that do prescribe preset “cures” to common symptoms. However, this distinction may further illustrate the inner yin yang within the field itself. As with Daoism, the focus of the former is on the individual’s journey, while the latter may presume some universality of the human experience. This connection may be the reason why the European brand of modern psychology as a field of inquiry is fast gaining popularity in China (Han & Zhang, 2007). Herein lies where Daoism can benefit modern psychology, as to aggrandize the perspectives, both individual and cultural, from which to perceive the psyche. Culturally, the field of psychology has traditionally been viewed via a Western gaze, but Daoist thinking can pluralize the direction from which to view this field as well as the perspectives of therapy. Taking a balanced, heteroglossic stance in conceiving of psychology, one can more readily see the complexities and intertwined, mutually affecting system of psychological forces. The system of the individual (in addition to the family) becomes a paramount influence for her or him.

Perhaps with greater incorporation of Daoist thinking, psychologists can limit categorically branding clients with specific diagnoses, but rather see their psychological condition as a blend of different circumstances. In the conjunction of different disorders, perhaps different treatments can be recommended. For example, an individual with bipolar disorder may also have obsessive compulsive disorder. His or her mania or depression may influence, or be influenced by, the OCD. These specific ailments can to be assessed in relations to each other as each symptom may manifest differently with shifting corresponding conditions. In this way

patients are not labeled with categorical conditions and DSM diagnoses, but rather are treated as complex, individual cases that may need a blended, intersecting regiment of treatment.

A Dialogue between the West and the East

For dialogic practice to exist in the birthplace of Daoism, there perhaps needs to be a loosening of the rigid stratification and hierarchical structure that exists in the current Chinese society (Bakhtin, 1981; Wu, 2005). In this way, parties can engage with one another as equals and boundaries between individuals can be reduced. But, similar to Western culture, Chinese culture was not always uniform either. The lack of dialogue in Chinese society may also be due to, according to Low (2011) and Cotterell (1993), the refusal by those in authority to fully accept the tenants of Daoism.

Those who ruled China during dynastic times for thousands of years wanted to promote Confucian doctrines of hierarchical, patriarchal piety, rather than egalitarian, democratic discourse, to fully control the people. In reality, Daoism has often been an unofficial, more “indigenous ‘way’ of personal salvation” for the Chinese people (Cotterell, 1993, p. 273), while Confucianism’s stress on piety and reverence to authority and tradition has been the public societal doctrine.

This paper does not assert that influence has been unidirectional, that Western culture owes its profundity to Chinese ingenuity. Indeed, long before Marco Polo made his historic trek to the ancient kingdom, there have been numerous contacts between the two cultures, dating back to the Roman Empire via the Silk Road, or even prior (Liu, 2015). It may be more apropos to consider a dialectic of cultural influences that perpetually occurs. Perhaps cultural hybridity has often been the case (Bhabha, 1991), that no culture is ever completely immune to the influence of any other throughout history. It is quite apropos that the bidirectional *path* or *Dao* of

the Silk Road carried this cultural exchange, and also the seeds of dialogic thinking (Honko, 1996). I contend that “meaning is always dialogic” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.121), with the signified and its signifier engaged in an eternal yin yang relationship.

Yet, there is not merely a binary, dualistic result of yin yang counteraction, but a plethora of heteroglossic strata filled with diverse intentions and accents (Bakhtin, 1981). Between and within individuals and languages, there are “highly specific dialogic relations; no matter how these languages are conceived, they may all be taken as particular points of view on the world” (p.293). Bakhtin’s views of dialogue are more multidimensional, innervating more spaces, affecting nuances in meaning in each word. He was also concerned about the context of words, which influences the parole of language (de Saussure, 1986), affecting its intended meaning. There is perpetual tension in the socially-charged, contextually-charged definition of language. His notions of dialogue span global cultural forces to local individualistic idiosyncrasies.

With regards to psychology, Jung’s (2014) notion of the Self also emphasizes this concept of totality and the whole. The Self is seen as the core of one’s existence, as the unification of an individual’s consciousness with his or her unconsciousness, just as the *tai ji* unifies the yin and yang. In fact, dialogical self theory and Jungian psychology are engaged in its own yin yang relationship, wherein the similarities and distinctions become less clearly defined, as their philosophical boundaries are seen as ever more entangled (Jones & Morioka, 2011).

Both Daoism and Bakhtinian dialogism, or heteroglossia, are driving forces to advance thought or ideas. Through this tension in thinking, new and hybrid ideas are born. Ideas are no longer single-voiced, but must contend with its opposites to guard against the permanency of any one notion, to consider other perspectives. When opposite or divergent notions are considered,

our static ideas of the world are troubled, such as the notion that Earth is the center of the skies or how the world is flat. Both forces compel the progression of civilization and humanity, of our understanding, so our thinking can invoke diverse notions simultaneously. It is only when we consider what once we thought was impossible or untrue that we can begin to imagine a more true future.

The human mind responds to paradoxes and contradictions, just as we understand satire and sarcasm in speech or script. These rhetorical devices are often more effective at presenting a stance because the audience is shown the absurdity of the opposite condition. In texts such as Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Orwell's *Animal Farm*, and Huxley's *Brave New World*, the reader is presented with a depiction of reality that presents the inherent paradoxes of society. These works actually germinate awareness of the many flaws of the human condition. Our minds, when considering the exaggerated realities of what we fear or what we idealize, comes to a greater understanding of our world and ourselves. Paradoxes, or the simultaneous existence of two contrasting thoughts, invite such awareness.

With the development of psychology, the ability to peer into that noumenal, abstract sphere of our mind is made concrete, partially bridging the dualism of mind and body. Psychology transcends that duality, bringing the clandestine to ready perception. The Chinese philosophy of Daoism, along with Bakhtinian dialogism, creates a tentative, dynamic space where this vein of thought is encouraged to flourish. The reflection and refraction of reality of some counterpoint or shadow conjures a more complete, more authentic representation.

In essence, the mind, no matter if it exists in an open democratic society or a more closed authoritarian one, is always engaged in dialogue, at the very least with itself. Dialogue takes place when we consider the many sides of an issue. In the plethora of positionalities and

references, an internal dialogue is inevitable. Yet, these same complex individuals can still devise a political structure which discourages the flourishing of heteroglossia to ensure a restrictive political system (e.g., China's authoritarian political structure). Perhaps, this is another example of the paradox of reality. Whereas psychology and humanism validates the divergence of voices in the world, political realities may be concocted with the express purpose of stifling these contrary voices. In other words, even dialogic individuals can implement undialogic societies to further a social goal or political agenda. Even in democratic societies, disharmony and imbalance in society still no doubt exist. Thus, tension also exists between the real world and our dialogic imagination.

Indeed, all global cultures are apt to be dialogic, and this perhaps necessitates a hybrid and fluid reconception of cultural identity (Bhabha, 1991). There are certainly different dialogic mechanisms at work: at the macroscale with larger cultural contexts and products, and on the individual level, even within individuals (Hermans et al., 1992). There are stratified levels of dialogue perpetually occurring, affecting the multitudinous dimensions of realities. As global cultures change and are changed by the dialogism spurred by globalization, so too are the microscale inter and intrapersonal dialogism incited by increasing individual transactions (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). There is also dialogue between these two forces, as the individual becomes more aware of the larger cultural shifts occurring in his or her world. Thus individual interactions or intrapersonal dialogue may be affected by the larger global dialogue, impacting the way one conceives of oneself, and of the relationship one has with one's context. However, dialogical individuals are also capable of constructing undialogic societies, as with the Chinese people. Again, we see the contradictory nature of human society and the human condition.

Conclusion

To the West, China is a paradoxical nation, one identified by millennia of authoritarian dynastic monoglossic rule (Inada, 2003) blended with dialogic, liberating philosophic foundations. Perhaps this paradox is accepted because of this culture's comfort with the mutual existence of paradoxical phenomena, this comfort with a contradictory reality. The West has also had similar paradoxical conditions, especially amidst its "Dark" Ages. Now, as we move to a post postmodern, post poststructural future, notions and boundaries of reality are once again troubled and what was once known and static become tentative and ephemeral. Bakhtin's dialogic theories recognize and further the ambiguous struggle for knowledge and understanding. In this way, the Western and the Chinese experience mirror each other, perhaps constructing its own yin yang counterbalance.

Psychology, a notably Western concept, has gained popularity in China in recent years (Yang & Ye, 2014). Perhaps, the Daoist philosophical influences in Chinese thought invite such a discipline. With recognition of this globalized world community, there is no need to divide understanding between East and West, between distinct cultures, because as evidenced by Roman contact with China, perhaps we have long been interconnected culturally. So, dialogue may in fact be neither Western nor Chinese in origin, as neither culture can own the concept. Dialogue may have long been a hybrid construct we co-imagine and co-exist. In conceiving reality through a Daoist outlook, one can more readily understand Chinese culture, Western culture, and the interaction or mutual influence between the two. Also, partial insight is given into the Chinese psyche, as one that thrives on contradictions and paradoxes. Human existence and psychology may best be addressed via these paradoxical ruminations, so that truth and reality be forever mutually negotiated and dialogically bound.

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